

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2486

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 11598

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, SOCI

SUBJECT: NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION

REF: USDAO SANTIAGO, CHILE 241915Z NOV 76

1. REAR ADMIRAL LUIS NIEMANN NUNEZ ASSUMED DUTIES AS THE NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION ON DECEMBER 6. HE REPLACES REAR ADMIRAL ARTURO TRONCOSO DAROCH, WHO WAS DESIGNATED COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE NAVAL SQUADRON. PRESIDENT PINOCHET SWORE IN THE NEW MINISTER IN A BRIEF CEREMONY ON DECEMBER 3.

2. IN THE CEREMONY, PINOCHET STATED THAT OUTGOING MINISTER TRONCOSO HAD PERFORMED HIS DUTIES, BOTH AS HOUSING AND AS EDUCATION MINISTER (FROM MAY 14, 1975 TO THE PRESENT), IN "A HIGH SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AND EFFICIENCY," AND DESCRIBED HIM AS "ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT MINISTERS" THE GOC HAS HAD.

3. COMMENT: REF IR REPORTED THAT TRONCOSO HAD BEEN UNDER FIRE FROM UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL SECTORS AND THAT HIS REPLACEMENT WAS IMMINENT. PINOCHET HIMSELF REPORTEDLY BELIEVED THAT THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM WAS STAGNANT AND REQUIRED A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP. IN CONTRAST, HOWEVER, TO TRONCOSO'S IGNOMINIOUS FATE (I.E., AMBASSADOR TO CANADA) AS FORECAST BY THE IR'S SOURCE, HE WAS MOVED UP TO ONE OF THE CHILEAN NAVY'S PLUMS AS COMMANDER OF THE SQUADRON. SIGNIFICANTLY, THE EDUCATION POST REMAINS IN THE NAVY'S SPHERE OF INFLUENCE. THOUGH NOT AN ACADEMICIAN, REAR
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ADMIRAL NIEMANN BRINGS CREDITABLE SKILLS AS AN ADMINISTRATOR

AND A TECHNICIAN.

4. PRIOR TO THE NEW APPOINTMENT, NIEMANN SERVED AS THE DIRECTOR OF NAVAL ENGINEERING. AN ACCOMPLISHED ENGINEER AND ADMINISTRATOR, NIEMANN HAS CONSTANTLY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF MODERN NAVAL ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE NUCLEAR ERA. HE HAS NOT REPORTEDLY HAD ANY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION.

5. BIO DATA ON NIEMANN: REAR ADMIRAL NIEMANN WAS BORN IN IQUIQUE ON AUGUST 31, 1926. HE GRADUATED FROM THE CHILEAN NAVAL SCHOOL IN JANUARY 1946, WHERE HE STUDIED PRIMARILY ENGINEERING COURSES. HE SERVED AS THE CHIEF OF THE CHILEAN NAVAL MISSION IN THE US FROM 1968 TO 1969. OTHER ASSIGNMENTS INCLUDE: INSTRUCTOR AND CHIEF OF STUDIES OF THE NAVAL ENGINEERING SCHOOL, MANAGER OF AN INDUSTRIAL PLANT IN VALPARAISO, AND INSPECTOR OF NAVAL ENGINEERING IN TALCAHUANO. HE WAS PROMOTED TO REAR ADMIRAL IN APRIL 1975. HE MARRIED THE FORMER ANITA FIGARI IN JANUARY 1957 AND HAS FIVE CHILDREN: FEDERICO (PRESENTLY ENROLLED IN THE US NAVAL ACADEMY), LUIS, ANITA MARIA, JORGE AND PABLO. POPPER

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